



### **What is the Earth Charter?**

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all peoples a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family and the larger living world. It is an expression of hope and a call to help create a global partnership at a critical juncture in history.

The Earth Charter has an inclusive and ethical vision that recognizes the reality that environmental protection, human rights, equitable human development, and peace are interdependent and indivisible. It provides a new framework for thinking about and addressing these issues. The result is a very broad conception of what constitutes sustainable development.

### **How Useful is the Earth Charter?**

The Earth Charter can be used as a tool for positive change. As a document of universal principles for sustainable living, it is a roadmap for ordinary people to contribute towards a sustainable, just and respectful society. It can be used as a way for people to apply global values at the community level, and thus encourage the organization of constructive, grassroots activities. In short, it is a starting point for ordinary people to start a "Quiet Revolution" towards sustainable living.

### **What can we do with the Earth Charter?**

Because the Earth Charter is a vast document, it can be an overwhelming experience to grasp in its entirety. But, the Earth Charter is broken down into "bite-size" sections of 60 separate issues that need addressing in order to create a sustainable society around the world.

The key with the Earth Charter is taking individual action first by applying some of the values in the Earth Charter in your own life--at home--at work--in your community activities--and be an example for others in sustainable living.

It does not have to be major change in one's lifestyle, but it can start with steady efforts to improve one's habits.

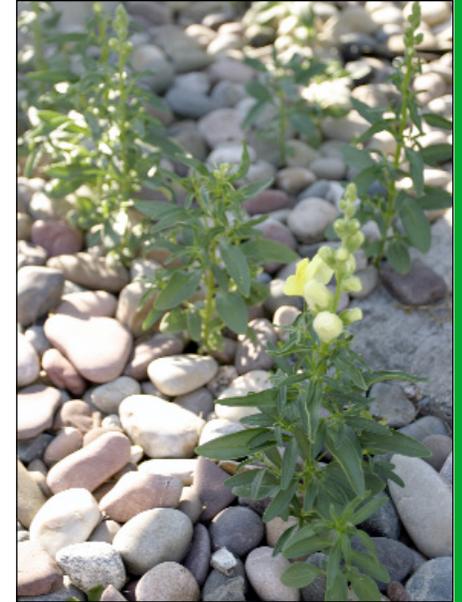
It can be as simple as being more conscious about what you buy at the mall, what you throw away at home, how much water you use in the bathroom or kitchen, how you behave with others on the street, and so forth. These individual changes in habit can go a long way in influencing other people around you.

Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Buddhist lay organization, Soka Gakkai International, has encouraged, **"A great revolution of character in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of society, and further, will enable a change in the destiny of humankind."**

### **Realizing the Power of One Person**

At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it can be difficult to believe that one ordinary person can have a huge impact in the world. But in a true democratic sense, it is the collective efforts of individuals who share a common goal for sustainable living that makes one person a powerful force for change.

Wangari Maathai of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya has said, **"Every one of us can make a contribution...just imagine what's happening if there are billions of people out there doing something. Just imagine the power of what we can do."**



## **Using the Earth Charter for Positive Change**

Personal action at the community level is where people can have the most direct impact. It may seem like a small step, but like Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March that sparked the rise of Indian independence, a single step forward can create a massive movement for change.

Wangari Maathai of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya noted, **"It's very, very important for us to take action at the local level. Because sometimes when we think of global problems, we get disempowered. But when we take action at the local level, we are empowered."**

### **At Home**

We have the most influence in promoting change in our own homes, by beginning with our own daily lives. We can be more responsible with our resources like electricity and water. We can reduce air pollution by doing more in a single trip with our cars. We can buy more local products and groceries which require less resources than imported products and groceries.

While these may be small changes in our habits, they have an accumulating effect as time goes on. Using 10L less water a day results in 3.650L saved a year. Using a single 20W compact-florescent lightbulb instead of a 60W incandescent lightbulb can save 30 KWh a year (based on a daily average usage of 2 hours a day). Multiply these savings by a hundred, a thousand or ten-thousand people and you can see incredible savings in resources--from simply making little changes in our daily habits.

For more ideas on Using the Earth Charter for Positive Change at Home, visit [www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter](http://www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter).

### **At Work**

The workplace is an equally important area of our lives where we can employ the Earth Charter on a daily basis. While many medium-to-large sized companies have recycling programs, many small-to-medium sized businesses often do not. Unless the business owner or manager is environmentally conscious, the idea of sorting plastics and paper from garbage is probably last on his/her mind. But if we are in a position to make the change, the impact can be equally large at work as at home. The simple change from using paper or styrofoam cups to personal mugs can save thousands of wasted cups being sent to landfills because of our daily coffee fix.

Even improving the office or work environment can be Earth Charter related. Improving office communication and dialogue with employees and managers can not only make the work environment a more enjoyable place to work, but also promotes values of tolerance, understanding and respect for other people's opinions and views.

For more ideas on Using the Earth Charter for Positive Change at Work, visit [www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter](http://www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter).

### **In Democracy**

While the Earth Charter can be used in dealing with civic, provincial, national and international issues and causes, it can also be used to enhance the democratic and governing process itself. City Councils, provincial ministries and national governments can adopt the Earth Charter as a statement of principles from which council decisions can be based upon.

Voters can use the Earth Charter as a means to judge candidates during election campaigns. Citizens can use the Earth Charter to keep elected officials and government agencies accountable for their decisions.

For more ideas on Using the Earth Charter for Positive Change in Democracy, visit [www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter](http://www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter).

### **It all Begins with You**

These are just some of the areas the Earth Charter can be applied to create positive change for sustainable living. Other areas where the Earth Charter can be applied is in Education, in Community Activities, in Inter-Faith Dialogue, and many other areas of society. Individuals taking action is the key for starting a "Quiet Revolution" for sustainable living.

### **For more information**

Visit : [www.EarthCharter.org](http://www.EarthCharter.org)  
[www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter](http://www.SGICanada.org/EarthCharter)

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